would be met from existing budgetary outlays or would it entail further budgetary provision; and

(c) the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Government are taking necessary steps to augment aerial surveillance capability in the sensitive border areas including Kargil.

(b) the cost will be met out of budgetary allocation.

(c) For reasons of national security it would not be desirable to reveal details in this regard.

Press briefing by Army Staff General

1394. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Army Staff General at the press briefing held during his recent visit to U.S.A. has made political statements on matters concerning Kashmir, Loc, Pakistan besides South Asian region, exceeding his brief and having far reaching political implications;

(b) if so, whether government have examined the statements made by Army Staff General at his press briefing in U.S.; and

(c) if so, the reaction of Government with regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Chief of the Army Staff did not give any press briefing or make any political statements during his recent visit to the U.S.A.

(b) and (c) Do not arise, in view of (a) above.

Indian prisoners of Kargil war in Pakistan

1395. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) How many Indian solthers are still being kept in captivity of Pakistan as prisoners of war, since the Kargil conflict began;

(b) How many of them have been released so far by the Pakistani authorities, including those who were released through the intervention of the International Committee of Red Cross; and

(c) Whether any dialogue in this regard is expected by Government of India with new regime in Pakistan in the near future?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) None, Sir.

(b) One Air Force personnel and two Army personnel were released through the intervention of the International Committee of Red Cross on 3rd June 1999 and 16th September 1999 respectively.

(c) Does not arise.

Air crashes in IAF

1396. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA:
SHRI AMAR SINGH:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of IAF fighter planes lost in crashes during the last three years, alongwith the number of pilots killed in each crash;

(b) what were the precise reasons for those crashes and how do they compare with other foreign countries; and

(c) what steps Government have taken to improve the safety measures and with what results?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Since 1997-98 till 9th December 1999 IAF has lost 46 fighter planes in crashes and 16 pilots were killed.

(b) The main reasons of these accidents were technical defects, human error and bird hit. It is not possible to compare the accident rate of IAF with those of other countries in the absence of correct and complete statistics, relating to number of accidents, fleet size, the annual flying hours, the operational environment, the quality and magnitude of infrastructure etc., which are different in different countries.

(c) A high Powered Committee on fighter Aircraft Accidents (COFAA) was constituted under the chairmanship of Scientific Adviser to Raksha Mantri to analyse the causes of the accidents which submitted its report in September, 1997. It has made certain recommendations to minimise accident rate. Implementation of these